

DUXBURY HISTORY FILE  
REFERENCE

# Oboist still enjoys performing his music

## Performs with daughter in Plymouth concert

By Grey Perry  
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DUXBURY — He's appeared with some of the country's most renowned orchestras in over 9,000 concert appearances, but last week he performed a little closer to home.

Island Creek Road resident Wayne Rapier, who has made over 4,000 appearances with the Boston and Philadelphia symphonies, made a guest appearance with the Plymouth Philharmonic at Memorial Hall.

Rapier, 66, is now retired from the Boston Symphony Orchestra which he joined as Associate First Oboist in 1970. He retired from the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1995, "to play in places where I want to play, and to play music that makes me happy."

Rapier has been playing music to make a living since he was 18, while he was still a student at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, N.Y. He had followed his older brother and sister there. "They were my idols as I grew up. My brother Leon got me into music when we were youngsters growing up in Texas. As soon as my fingers would reach, I got an oboe. My parents were not musical at all, but they set a standard of discipline I did not question when it came to practice. They said 'do it, and I did it.' Practice was easy for me, I could accomplish in an hour what took others four hours."

As he became older, Rapier's interest in music became stronger. "When I was 12 or 13, we moved to a school that had no band, and I managed to hunt and fish a lot, but music was my main interest. I began to win contests on the state and national level. When I attended the National Music Camp in Michigan at age 14, I spent eight hours a day with music. That was the first time I had heard Brahms. I couldn't get enough of music. I had a teacher there from France who said, 'Most of my students I try to talk out of the music business. For him (Rapier), it was too late.' That was when I decided not to become an aeronautical engineer and instead become a musician."

The following summer, he was voted "best musician of the year," and offered a scholarship to Eastman at the age of 16.

Since then, Rapier has played principal oboe with the following orchestras: Indianapolis (at age 19), US Marine Band and Orchestra attached to the White House, Kansas City, Baltimore, Philadelphia's Robin Hood Dell, and the Boston Pops.

He is also a teacher. He taught for five years as professor of oboe at the Oberlin Conservatory. While there, 10 of his students became oboists with major symphony orchestras. He teaches at the New England Conservatory of Music now, and also privately.

Rapier has travelled the world playing concerts, and currently visits France on a regular basis, teaching, and presenting an Oboe Orchestral Festival every May and June. He also consults almost every other day by phone with a Paris oboe manufacturer. "The oboe is still evolving, with new



**In concert** — Wayne Rapier performed with the Plymouth Philharmonic. **For a review, see B10.**

materials replacing the rare woods from Africa that have been traditionally used, but which are now running out. The new composite materials won't crack, aren't as sensitive to temperature changes and do provide a good sound. They vibrate well." He said a traditional oboe can wear out in 45 years of use.

When asked about what it was like to play in the Boston Symphony, Rapier said, "We played 216 concerts a year, all were recorded for broadcast. These were always played back if someone was rocking the boat too much (making mistakes). The best part was the company of complete professionals. We only had to worry about ourselves, everyone else was exactly where they were supposed to be."

Rapier said the audition process was tough. "For four places, there were 320 musicians, many of them my students. Eighty-five accomplished musicians from all over the world play for a week to

try for one of the oboe positions in the orchestra." He said the minimum starting salary for the symphony is \$75,000 per year, plus many perks.

Rapier's first exposure to this area came in 1950, when he played in the orchestra for the Plymouth Opera Company. "It was the first time I had been to New England, the first time I ever saw the ocean. I drove from Texas in a Model A Ford, with a bad muffler. I couldn't hear for two days after I got here." He received room and board for eight operas performed that summer, when he said he fell in love with opera. That was the same summer his roommate at Eastman told him he was going to marry Rapier's fiancée. That turned out to be a fortuitous event, as Rapier soon met Toni Chandler, a cello student at Eastman, to whom he has been married for 43 years. Toni is currently a cellist with the Boston Pops and teaches privately. "She is a top cellist," Rapier said.

When Rapier returned to New England with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1970, he saw an advertisement for a furnished house in Duxbury, and he and his family have been there ever since. Their present home is on Island Creek Road. Two of their three children, who attended Duxbury schools, are making their living playing music. The third is a computer specialist, "who may enjoy music more than any of us," said Rapier.

At last Saturday's Plymouth Philharmonic performance, Rapier and his daughter Bonnie Robinson, who plays cello with the Plymouth orchestra, performed a pre-concert duet. "It was fun to be

with her. We don't play together very often. At Christmas family musicals, or at a wedding, we will play, sometimes with other family members, but not often." Rapier said his children were at somewhat of a disadvantage as they watched their parents practice only a few hours a day. "What they didn't see were the 5-8 hours a day we used to practice. They thought it was possible to become accomplished with less practice."

When asked about practice, Rapier said he plays every day, sometimes one hour, sometimes up to six hours, "when I am working out something." He says music is "an ungrateful mistress" that requires frequent attention. "On days when you feel least like practicing, and practice isn't going well, it invariably pays off. If I miss a day, it takes a few days to get back to where I was."

"That is the part I admire most about the players in the Plymouth Philharmonic. They all have full time jobs, and cannot devote as much time to practice as they might like. But by the time of the concert, they sound very good. I admire them."

Since retirement, Rapier has been able to spend more time as president of Boston Records, a company which specializes in recording orchestral artists who are in their prime. Rapier has 17 artists he is currently recording. He also finds time to fly as a commercial pilot, and has a certified flight instrument instructor's rating.

Describing what he does best, Rapier says musicians are like impressionist painters, telling a story slightly differently each time. "We are painting sound with tone colors."